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L E T T E R

TO A

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT,

ON THE

C A S E

OF THE

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS; *K*

AND THE

EXPEDIENCY OF A GENERAL REPEAL OF ALL
PENAL STATUTES THAT REGARD
RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXXXVII.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Letter was written before the CASE of the Dissenters was agitated in the House of Commons; but was then suppressed from motives of delicacy. As these no longer exist, it is offered to the public in its primitive form, with the addition of only a note or two, occasioned by some recent pamphlets on the same subject.

ADVERTISEMENT

THE following facts were
for the use of the Commission
agreed in the House of Commons
was the first printed law in force of the
country. As soon as the bill was
it is the result of an extensive law
the addition of only a few more
formed the first book published on the
subject.

L E T T E R

TO A

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, &c.

A Printed sheet was, a few days ago, put into my hand, entitled, *The Case of the Protestant Dissenters, with reference to the Test and Corporation Acts.* The intention of it is to move the legislature to repeal such parts of these acts, as exclude from military and civil offices all who re-

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ceive not the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the usage of the church of England, within three months after their admittance, or one year before their election, if their office be a corporation one.

Although I sincerely wish the *protestant dissenters* success in their application to parliament, having ever considered such tests as inimical to civil as well as to religious liberty, and often a source of the vilest hypocrisy; yet I am sorry to be obliged to say, that, in the paper now before me, there is a manifest partiality in the statement of facts, and an illiberality of sentiment in the mode of reasoning, of which I did not think the *protestant dissenters* of the present day capable: and I am persuaded, that many protestant dissenters are of the same opinion with myself.—Would the enlightened Price, or the candid Priestley have drawn up such a case?

It

It sets forth, that the act of the twenty-fifth of Charles the Second must have been made "wholly against PAPISTS; and not "to prevent any danger which could happen to the nation or church from Protestant Dissenters."—Why? Because,

First, the act is called "an act for preventing dangers, which may happen from popish recusants."

Secondly, From the circumstances in which it was formed; namely, the suspension of the penal laws, in favour of papists—our being in war with a protestant state; and the Duke of York's open profession of popery.

Let us see how far these assertions, accord with the whole tenor of Charles's reign, the general disposition of the nation during that period, and the constant opposition which the established religion has ever since made

to the repeal of that act : although it is evident that, both from prior and posterior acts against *papists*, it can neither serve nor injure *them* in the least degree.

I hardly think, that it will be seriously asserted, that at the Restoration, the Roman catholics were a party dangerous or redoubtable to either church or state : whereas, at that time “ prelacy and presbytery struggled “ for the superiority,”* and their mutual animosities were carried to the greatest height.

The episcopal party, however, prevailed. In the parliament of 1661, the bishops were restored to their places in the house of lords ; and in the house of commons no more than fifty-six of the presbyterian party had obtained seats. The corporation act of this year is an evident proof that the parlia-

* Hume, Vol. VII. p. 369, last edit. 8vo.

ment dreaded that party, and meant to depress them.*

The act of uniformity in 1662 is still more flagrant. It was, says Hume, “ a
“ pledge of the sincere attachment of par-
“ liament to the episcopal hierarchy, and of
“ their antipathy to presbyterians.” In fact,
two thousand clergymen of that persuasion
were, in consequence, turned out of their
livings.

This could not be ascribed to the king or
court. For though Charles hated, and had
reason to hate, the dissenters, his easy na-

* The author of the *Case* grants, that, “ probably,”
this act, at least, was levelled at them. He should,
with Lord Mansfield, have said, “ that it was most cer-
“ tainly intended by the legislature to prohibit the per-
“ sons therein described being elected to any corporation
“ offices, and to disable them from taking any such
“ offices upon them.” See his speech in the house of
lords, 4th Feb. 1767, in the Appendix to Dr. Fur-
neaux's Letters, p. 260.

tural disposition, and his wish to serve the catholic party who had suffered so much in the royal cause, and whom he knew to be strongly attached to regal power, made him propose to his parliament, the very next year (1663), a general toleration in favour of protestant dissenters, and to catholics the free private exercise of their religion.—

“ But the declared intention of easing the dissenters, and the secret purpose of favouring catholics, were equally disagreeable to that parliament.”* And the commons represented “ that the indulgence intended would prove most pernicious both to church and state, would open the door to schism, encourage faction, disturb the public peace, and discredit the wisdom of the legislature.” At the same time, they solicited and obtained a proclamation against

* Hume, Vol. VII. p. 386, last edit. 8vo.

the papists; which, however, was not strictly executed.

The parliament of 1664 discovered a continuance of the same principles, which had prevailed in the preceding ones.—“Monarchy and the church were still the great objects of regard and affection.” The act of uniformity was not deemed sufficient to guard them from the designs of sectaries. It was enacted, “that where—ever five persons, above those of the same household, should assemble in a religious congregation, every one of them was liable to imprisonment or a fine.”

In 1665, it was enacted that no dissenting teacher, who took not the non-resistance oath, should come within five miles of any place where he had formerly preached after the act of oblivion, under the penalty of six months imprisonment, and sixty pounds.

Not content with this, the church-party introduced a bill, for imposing the oath of non-resistance on the whole nation : and it was rejected only by three voices,

After Clarendon's dismissal and disgrace, in 1667, the dissenters began to make head again. But the success of that ill-advised measure, the re-establishing episcopacy in Scotland, shews that the high-church party were still superior, and determined to keep under the presbyterians. Acts were passed in both the English and Scottish parliaments for preventing and suppressing conventicles.

But what, above all, shews the complexion of those times, is that when Buckingham's party, in 1668, had laid a plan to reconcile and unite the presbyterians by a comprehension act ; and to grant to all sectaries (papists excepted) a toleration, and free exercise of their religion ; the commons
were

were so disgusted at this proposal, which had met with the court's approbation, that they immediately voted an address for a proclamation against conventicles; and, suspecting that the king still meant to do something in favour of the protestant dissenters, they passed a vote that no one should bring into the house any bill of that nature. And it was, after all, with some difficulty that they were prevailed upon to vote a supply.

It cannot be said that the comprehension scheme was intended, *offensively* to relieve protestant dissenters; but *really* to favour the catholics: the latter were expressly excluded from its operation; and no cause can be assigned for its giving such umbrage to parliament, but the danger they thought the church and state in from such a concession to dissenters.

The year after (1669) the act against conventicles

venticles passed, and received the royal assent. In this act there is this curious clause, "That if any dispute arise with regard to the interpretation of any part of it, the judges shall always explain the doubt in the sense least favourable to conventicles." So eagerly did parliament desire to suppress them.

Hitherto, then, it is plain that the puritans, not the papists, were the principal eye-fare to the English parliament; which, as the court expressed a wish to extend indulgence to them, prevented or frustrated the intention by some new intolerant act or resolve.

Things now, however, began to take another turn. The pernicious counsels of the new cabal—the unpopular rupture with the Dutch—the close league with France, and the Duke of York's declaring himself a Roman

Roman catholic, gave rise to new alarms about popery; which the long prorogation of parliament, and a proclamation suspending the penal laws, prodigiously increased. Yet the proclamation for suspending the penal laws, whilst it gave to protestant dissenters the public exercise of their religion, to catholics allowed only the exercise of theirs in private houses. The observation of Hume on this proclamation is, that "the dissenters, "the most inveterate enemies of the court, "were mollified with these indulgent maxims; and the catholics, under their shelter, "enjoyed more liberty than the laws had "hitherto allowed them."* That is, the court, in order to give some small degree of toleration to catholics, whom it considered among its best friends, gave a full toleration to dissenters, though it knew them to be its "most inveterate enemies."

* Vol. VII. p. 477.

To this declaration the lord keeper refused to affix the great seal; and when, at the meeting of parliament, the king insisted on his right to exercise this part of his prerogative, he met with such vigorous opposition from his commons, as obliged him to depart from it. He revoked the suspending declaration, and with his own hand tore off the seals.

Still the clamours against popery were industriously kept up, and propagated; the dissenters joining in the cry, and endeavouring, by that means, to fix on the papists only, the suspicions and distrust, that had hitherto more particularly fallen on themselves.

It was at this conjuncture, that the act alluded to in the *Case* was made: and from the title of the act, the writer infers that it was never meant to include protestant dissenters.

fenters. But I beg leave to affirm with Dr. Furneaux (Letters to Blackstone, Let. I. note, p. 12.) that “ to illustrate or to explain acts
 “ of parliament is one thing; to restrain
 “ or limit them another: whether they
 “ amount to more than their titles express,
 “ must be determined by the words or
 “ clauses of the act itself. The test-act sup-
 “ plies us with a case in point; it being *an*
 “ *act for preventing dangers arising from po-*
 “ *pish recusants*; and yet every one knows it
 “ is so drawn as to comprehend protestant
 “ dissenters.” Indeed, whoever reads the
 whole act with attention, and compares it
 with the history of the times, will, I think,
 clearly perceive that, though to quiet the
 minds of the people alarmed with dangers
 (real or imaginary) from popery, it be in
 the preamble held forth as an act against
popish recusants; it is equally at least, if not
 more especially, levelled at protestant dis-
 senters.

senters. The truth appears to be, that the court party still wished to favour the catholics; but as the tide of popular prejudice against that body was every day rising higher and higher, they found it expedient to stem it by passing this act; but took care at the same time to stem another torrent, which they had experienced to be far more impetuous; by the introduction of the sacramental test: and as they had often before attempted in vain to screen the catholics from the severity of the penal statutes, by relaxing them in favour of the other dissenters; so now they were resolved to strike at the dissenters through the sides of the catholics.

“ But (says the writer of the *Case*) so far
 “ were the protestant dissenters from being
 “ aimed at in this bill, that, in their zeal to
 “ rescue the nation from the dangers which
 “ were at that time apprehended from popish

“ recusants, they contributed to the passing
 “ of the bill ; willingly subjecting them-
 “ selves to the disabilities created by it, rather
 “ than obstruct what was deemed so neces-
 “ sary to the common welfare.”

Generous dissenters ! But still they understood, at the very time, that they were included in that disqualifying bill, and that thereby they “ were subjected to disabilities ;” although rather than see the vessel of the state overwhelmed by popery, they tamely allowed themselves to be thrown out, like another Jonah, for the sake of the common weal ! Let him who can believe this, believe it. For my part, I believe that the dissenting members in that parliament saw well, that the bill would pass into an act without their concurrence ; and therefore they made a virtue of necessity, and raised, as they have often done, and now endeavour to do, their own *merit* on the pretended

ed *demerit* of others. For without any view or wish to obstruct the indulgence of parliament to *protestant dissenters*, or without the least intention of representing them as dangerous subjects; I will take upon me to affirm, that, from the first establishment of the English church to the present day, she has had more to fear from protestant dissenters than from popish recusants. I do not even except the short reign of that infatuated bigot James the Second. His measures were too ouvert, too violent and too ridiculous, not to end in the ruin of himself and party; and instead of subverting the national religion, could only give new strength to it: while the secret machinations of the very numerous presbyterian faction have been, for more than a century, insensibly sapping its foundations; and will, most probably, in the end overthrow the whole fabric. The mine, as Dr. Priestley
calls

calls it, has been long laying, not only "grain by grain," but barrel by barrel; and although perhaps it will not, for some time yet, be ready for springing, the work, I suspect, is much further advanced, than it is generally believed.

As a mere individual, I am little concerned about the event. Whether any civil establishment be conducive to the interests of religion, is still to me an undecided problem; and the arguments against it are at least fully as plausible and conclusive as those for it.—Certainly much more conform to the genuine spirit of "a kingdom which is not of this world." But that has nothing to do with the present question, which is merely, whether the present English establishment has more to fear from papists than from protestant dissenters? And for the resolution of this question I will venture to appeal, not only

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to all the bench of bishops and their adherents, but to every candid and well-informed dissenter in the nation.

But to return to the test-act. Nothing can be juster than what is said of it by Ralph : “ It was calculated not only to throw
 “ all papists out of office ; but to concenter
 “ all employments in those who professed
 “ the established religion.”*

It is true, indeed, that the dissenters, by their approbation of the test-act in as far as it regarded papists, hoped for some future mitigation of it in favour of themselves. In fact, in that same session, as is stated in the *Case*, a bill was brought into the house of commons for the special purpose of easing protestant dissenters, which had passed both houses, with some amendments ; but was lost by the sudden adjournment of

* Ralph, p. 223.

parliament. But does this bill import, that the dissenters were not meant to be included in the test-act? No, nor does it hold forth to them any relief from the onerous clause now complained of. If passed, it would have freed them from some pains and penalties (on condition of their subscribing to the thirty-nine articles), but would have admitted them to no office, from which either the test or corporation act excludes them.*

But nothing shews more evidently that these acts were ever considered as designed to include protestant dissenters, than the ineffectual efforts made at the revolution to have them repealed. Yet even William himself would never consent to that. The

* Another very strong proof that the test-act was meant to include dissenters, is, that in the parliament of 1675, when a new bill was drawn up against the papists, there is not a word in it to relieve protestant dissenters.

toleration act only protected them from the severity of penal statutes, and gave them leave to appoint deputies to serve in certain parochial and ward offices, if they should not think it fit to qualify themselves for them ; and this even is clogged with a *proviso*, that the person deputed be approved by those who would have approved the principal, if not otherwise unqualified.

In the subsequent reign, the cord was rather tightened than relaxed. As many of the dissenting party had been charged with occasional conformity, an act was passed in 1711, requiring all persons who held offices not only to receive the sacrament according to the rite of the church of England ; but to conform to her whole mode of worship during the time of holding them.

Some acts passed in the reigns of George the First and Second have explained and amended

amended some parts of the test and corporation acts, and limited their operations; but it is not asserted by the dissenters themselves, that there was ever an intention of repealing them: nay, some of the amendments are such as seem rather calculated to give them new strength; particularly those of the sixteenth of George the Second. Nor in the present reign, has there been any thing done to amend those amendments; nor any attempt made towards having the original acts repealed until now. Pity! it should be at length made in so objectionable a form.

For, in the *Case of the Protestant Dissenters*, there is not only an evident mis-statement of facts, of which there was no need for the proper enforcement of their just claim; but there is, moreover, a disgusting illiberality of sentiment unworthy of this enlightened and tolerant age.

For, in the first place, the indulgence requested would only go to relieve a part of protestant dissenters from a grievance which many protestant dissenters find a very small one, and which the almost annual acts of indemnity render no grievance at all; while there are penal and even bloody statutes remaining against a considerable part of their protestant brethren, for whom no relief is asked in this case. Not to mention that occasional conformity has not only been very generally practised by protestant dissenters, but has the approbation of some of their most eminent divines, and even of whole assemblies.*

The present application of protestant dis-

* In fact, are not our parliament, our armies, our navies, our corporations even, filled with protestant dissenters? who either make no scruple to qualify themselves by the sacramental test; or are brought to no inconvenience from neglecting it. In some instances they may avail themselves of it to avoid penalties, which their fellow subjects are liable to—witness the case of Mr. Evans, in 1757.

senters,

ponents, then, being a pitiful and partial application, for what is hardly worth soliciting for, and what they already in some measure possess, will probably meet with little regard from any part of the legislature for that very reason. The sticklers for establishment will consider it as the effect of a restless and turbulent disposition, that is never contented; and the real friends of religious freedom, and universal toleration, must look upon it as a silly endeavour to remove a mole-hill, whilst mountains remain untouched.

That you, Sir, are one of those who will view things in this light I cannot doubt; and that their number, in both houses, is neither small nor weightless. Is there not therefore ground to presume that some of those, instead of supporting only a paltry motion, calculated to remedy so small a negative inconvenience, will take occasion to

move for a general repeal of a number of penal statutes inflicting great and positive evils, under which many thousands of faithful subjects, and good citizens, continue to groan, and which are, in the eyes of all Europe, a disgrace to our penal code?

It may be urged that those oppressive and sanguinary laws are a mere *dead letter*; but if so, let them be decently *interred*, and no longer remain a public nuisance, to reflect dishonour on the polity of a civilized nation, and expose it to the scorn of mankind. If the penal statutes are in their own nature so severe and odious, that they can never be put in execution (which some of them certainly are), to what purpose is it then to retain them? If they be deemed necessary for the conservation of the state, let them be punctually enforced; if they be not necessary, let them be annulled. There is here

here no medium ; they must stand in our statute book, either for the national *safety* or *shame* !

But is it true that they are all a *dead letter* ? Quite the contrary ; there is a whole body of dissenting lieges, on whom some of them still operate as directly and effectually as ever ; and others, which though only of the disabling kind, are in their consequences equal to a penalty, and severe beyond example. If the other dissenters may be said to be “ chastised with whips,” this class of them is certainly “ chastised with “ scorpions ;” and while the former complain of being overloaded with the “ little “ finger” of government, the latter have long patiently borne the pressure of its “ loins.”

You readily conceive, sir, that I mean the English catholics, a body not numerous
indeed,

indeed, but confessedly respectable; and as firmly attached to the present government, and the constitution of their country, as any of his Majesty's subjects. And here again the writers of the *Case* of the dissenters are blameable for the idle and impertinent insinuations thrown out against what they term *popery* and *papists*; terms that have been too often employed to work upon the minds of the people, and inspire them with horror at their fellow-creatures, by imputing to them tenets which they expressly disavow, and practices which they disclaim and abjure.

Some of their tenets may be deemed absurd, some of their practices superstitious*, but

* Even in these respects, the catholics of the present day, and particularly the English catholics, are certainly not the same they were but half a century ago. The small, the very small indulgence that has been granted to them, has already produced a considerable revolution in their

but neither are incompatible with any one species of government. The supremacy of the Roman Pontiff is the only thing in their doctrine, that has the appearance of political danger : and to be sure it was once a dangerous doctrine, from the unwarrantable conclusions that were drawn from it, and the pernicious consequences that ensued. The sentence of an infallible judge was a tremendous sentence, and the thunders of the Vatican shook the firmest thrones in Christendom. But what was it, that first gave infallibility to the decisions of a Pope ?—What rendered his thunders formidable ? The lawless ambition, the pious folly, or the slavish weakness of temporal princes, who, to serve their own immediate purposes, or to satisfy their
 their minds. Since they began to taste a small portion of British liberty, they think, they speak, they write like Britons. If we wish to see further reforms among them, let them quaff it in full draughts ; and I mistake it much, if that will not more effectually bring about the purpose, than penalties and proscription.

ill-placed devotion, concurred to aggrandize the Roman see, until it gradually became the seat of universal empire, and its bishop the sovereign arbiter of nations. In vain the clergy murmured and remonstrated against the invasion on their rights; papal usurpation, supported by regal power, bore every thing down before it. The institution of religious orders contributed not a little to support the pope's pretensions. The little learning that existed, existed in the monasteries; and it was employed to assert and extend the supposed prerogatives of the Roman see; on which, despising all ordinary jurisdiction, they immediately depended.

Thus was the papal power, in times of general ignorance, screwed up to the most enormous pitch; when, like every other overgrown empire, it began to labour under its own weight, has fallen much faster than it rose,

rose, and is at present nearly reduced to its pristine narrow limits. The odious doctrine of deposing power, transferring crowns, and dispensing with oaths, has been long exploded in every catholic university.—Even bulls, that regard matters purely spiritual, have no force unless they be accepted by the national church, to which they are directed. Provincial synods, metropolitans, nay, simple bishops, take upon them to regulate the discipline of their respective districts, under the protection of the civil powers ; and a few years more will probably bring the form of the catholic hierarchy back to that of the first centuries.

At any rate, there is no longer danger to civil government from papal power. The present bishop of Rome is, in that respect, as harmless a personage as the man in the moon, and the supremacy which the English catholics allow to Pius VI. is not more dangerous

gerous to the constitution, than the primacy of his grace of Canterbury.

I have dwelt the longer on this subject, because I every day meet with, in occasional or periodical publications, the most ridiculous and unfair representations of the present state of the catholic religion, and particularly of the English catholics. Sometimes we are confidently told, that they already enjoy more liberty than some protestant dissenters: and that the commercial treaty with France will set them completely on a level with the other subjects of the realm*.

* Nothing can be more ill-founded than this idea. By an article of the treaty, the catholic subjects of France are to have the free exercise of their religion in England, in the same degree that the protestant subjects of England are to have the exercise of their religion in France: but what relief does that give to the English catholics, or to the French calvinists? who, by the bye, have had many indulgencies granted them, which the former enjoy not.

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If such assertions be made through ignorance, it is a very gross ignorance, and if they be the fruit of malevolence, it is a very grievous one. But let us see what real indulgence the papists have obtained.

By an act of the eighteenth of his present Majesty, in 1779, the catholics of England, on their taking an oath prescribed to them by the legislature, obtained security for their lawful property, and a sort of tacit permission to believe and pray after their own fashion, without being molested by informers and priest-catchers: though, strange to tell, they may still, through the force of standing laws, be fined again and again, not only for the exercise of their own religion, but for the non-exercise of the established religion: they may, in some cases, be imprisoned, in others banished; and I am not sure, but in certain circumstances, they may yet be “persecuted unto the death.”

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It is true these penalties are not likely to be inflicted ; and therefore I have only mentioned them to shew that they may ; and consequently, how little the Roman catholics have obtained by the late act in their favour : while, at the same time, they remain effectually excluded not only from all such offices, as the protestant dissenters are nominally, not really, excluded from, * the army,

* This is allowed by the dissenters themselves. *The test-acts do not in fact exclude them from offices. Very few scruple to receive the sacrament ; several of the most respectable corporations are in their hands (see the Right of Protestant Dissenters asserted, p. 146) ; while it is certain that the papists have not, nor cannot avail themselves of this expedient to qualify. It is, indeed, astonishing that the Case of the dissenters should insinuate, and the writer of the just-mentioned pamphlet affirm, that many catholics have no scruple to receive the sacrament according to the established rite. Let him point out a single papist in the kingdom that holds any office by occasional conformity ; since, as to what the same writer says, p. 148 (by way of a postil to the Case I suppose), about papal dispensations destroying the efficacy of every test by which papists are to be excluded, it is unjust and injurious in the highest degree. The English catholics have in the*

most

army, the navy, and the magistracy: but have not, though burthened with double taxes, a vote even in the election of their legislative representatives, much less can they be themselves elected, or take the seat due to their rank in either house of parliament. From the very bar, and courts of law, they are excluded. The public seminaries of learning are also shut up from them. They have neither the means of improving their talents, nor an opportunity of exerting them. Useless to themselves, and

most solemn manner abjured all such dispensations; but had they never done so, it is evident, from their conduct, that they make no account of them; for, if a papal dispensation could serve their turn, why need they be excluded from any place at all? What hinders them to defeat by that expedient, not only the sacramental test, but every other test that deprives them of any right which a Briton is born to enjoy? The quotation from the bishop of Cloyne's pamphlet is not fair: The transaction alluded to by the bishop, is greatly in favour of the Irish catholics: They reprobated the conduct of the papal *Nuncio*, despised his threats, and continue, with the acquiescence of Rome itself, to think themselves strictly and indispensably bound by their oaths.

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useless

useless to the common weal, they are, if they have any spirit, obliged to seek abroad what they cannot find at home—some employment suitable to their disposition, birth, and abilities, or pass their lives in a state of torpidity and inaction, that, but for some little domestic pursuits, would render life itself a burthen,

Such, Sir, you know to be the situation of the Roman catholics of England ; a situation truly pitiable, and of which the hardships are hardly to be conceived but by those who feel them. Would it not, then, have been more generous, and more just, for the protestant dissenters to have come forward on this occasion with a little more candour and a little more manliness * ? to have made their

* Of all the pamphlets that have been written on this occasion, either in favour of the dissenters or against them, I have not seen one in which there is not an astonishing want of candour and liberality, Dr. Priestley's Letter to Mr. Pitt excepted.

petition to parliament as comprehensive as possible? and to have endeavoured to open so wide a door of toleration as to admit their fellow dissenters, of whatever persuasion, to go in along with them? or, if they selfishly chose to go in alone, it surely did not become them to throw such stumbling-blocks in the way of their suffering brethren. The name of Christian is a much more ancient and more honourable, as well as a more comprehensive tie, than that of protestant; and there is a tie still more ancient and comprehensive than either—that of humanity. The time, I trust, is not at a great distance, when the full force of this last will be understood and felt over all the polished nations of the world, when philanthropy and commutual interests will be the sole links of society, when tests and penal laws will be no more deemed necessary for the security of religion, and when Papist and Protestant, Athanasian and Arian,

Lutheran and Calvinist, Trinitarian and Unitarian, will be names of mere distinction, not of reciprocal odium, and much less objects of reciprocal persecution.

And have we not reason to hope, Sir, that the British legislature will be among the first to bring about a system so desirable, and so congenial to the British constitution? God knows we have, and ever shall have, political disputes enough to divide us: why should those of religion come in for a share? Let some patriotic and enlightened soul, then, move at once for a repeal of every penal religious statute, and every religious test: Be the pledge of the fidelity of the subject in future, his ordinary oath of allegiance, and his subsequent conduct, and let him be answerable only for his own; let religious principles be no more confounded with political ones; but let every Briton, without forfeiting his birth-right, profess

his own belief of the Divinity, and worship him after his own mode ; and if he chooses not to worship at all, what is that to the state, if he faithfully serve it in the station he holds, or the charge he is intrusted with? In a word, let the only test of a good citizen be an obligation, to be a *peaceable subject* and an *honest man*.

Such a motion, Sir, would do infinite honour to the mover ; would be seconded and supported by every man whose heart were not callous to the feelings of humanity ; and would immortalize the sovereign and the minister, in whose reign and under whose auspices, it should be adopted, and passed into a law.

I have the honour to be, &c.

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I have the honour to be, Sir,